



The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

7 March 2019

Dear Damian,

We are writing to you with an urgent appeal for Government action to tackle the education funding crisis in the Spring Statement on 13th March. This crisis - rightly described by one of your Conservative colleagues in the House of Commons as a 'national emergency' – has been laid bare for all to see this week.

As you will know, the week began with Monday's Westminster Hall debate triggered by over 100,000 people signing a petition calling for increased funding. The debate saw one MP after another from across the political spectrum highlight the deleterious impact that cuts are having on educational provision. Several MPs read out the testimonies of members of the National Education Union who had contacted their members of Parliament prior to the debate. A small selection is provided below:

"Last year the school I work at had to lose many of its teaching assistants due to lack of money."

"I have to buy equipment and supplies for my job."

"We do not have budget for staff training, resources or opportunities for children."

"I am a qualified teacher now working and being paid as a teaching assistant, but I am being used to cover classes as the school cannot afford to employ supply teachers."

On the following day *The Times* reported on responses they had received from schools to freedom of information requests. They found that *'many schools are relying on parents to contribute to salaries, repair buildings and buy textbooks'*. As the report concluded *'relying on voluntary contributions by parents to plug vital gaps in school budgets is not a sustainable way to fund the kind of world-class education system that the younger generation will need to make their way in a post-Brexit world'*.

Attention has also been drawn this week to the decision of a primary school in Birmingham to close at 1pm on Fridays to save money, just the latest in a growing number of schools making similar decisions.

This week's developments show a deepening crisis caused by the Government's decision to take £5.1 billion in real terms out of school budgets since 2015.

The response from the Government, however, to these most recent developments has been tin-eared and inadequate. A parent worrying about arranging care for their child on a Friday afternoon would not have been placated by being told that more money is going into schools than ever before. Members of Parliament and education professionals were not reassured when told about overall cash increases of funding to their constituencies - they know the reality behind these figures is that *91%* of *schools* have experienced *real-terms cuts* in per pupil funding between 2015 and 2019 and schools are being asked to do more with less.

Members of the National Education Union are seeing every day in their schools and colleges how cuts are affecting the quality of the education they can provide. Over 82,000 members of the National Education Union responded to a recent survey, with 99% of respondents in state schools and sixth form colleges saying they believed Government funding cuts are having a negative impact.

We are calling on the Government, therefore, to face up to the national emergency we have over education funding and pledge in the Spring Statement the urgent injection of investment that is so desperately needed. This is a call which is also backed by over 600 local councillors, of all political parties, who continue to sign an open letter to you asking you to ensure the forthcoming spending review addresses the funding crisis in our schools.

As a first step the Government should reverse the cuts that have happened since 2015 and guarantee schools at least the same money per pupil in real terms as when it took office on a manifesto commitment to "protect school funding".

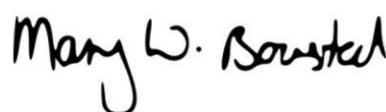
We are sending a copy of this letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretary



Dr Mary Boustead
Joint General Secretary

cc Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP